A listing of the streets of Leyton and Leytonstone

showing the approximate year in which they were occupied by their first residents, suggesting the inspiration for their names, and giving some additional information about them

Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society

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compiled by David Boote

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Foreword

This publication has been quite a few years in the making, and yet it is still only a temporary ‘stop-gap’.

The London Borough of Waltham Forest published Volumes One and Two of *The Streets of Waltham Forest*. Volume One covered Walthamstow, was by A D Law, and appeared in 1974. Volume Two covered Chingford, was by J M Hayward, and appeared in 1979. The London Borough of Waltham Forest was an amalgamation of three boroughs (in the county of Essex) : Walthamstow, Chingford and Leyton, and presumably there was an intention to produce a third volume, covering Leyton (including Leytonstone). A loose-leaf index to the streets of Leyton and Leytonstone was created and is held at the Borough of Waltham Forest’s Archive at Vestry House Museum. It was probably the first stage in preparing a Volume Three of *The Streets of Waltham Forest*, which for unknown reasons did not proceed further. Streets seem to have been dated on the basis of whether they appear on a map made in 1893. The listing here reflects my examination of rate collection records, the same basis as was used for Volumes One and Two. Suggestions are made as to the reason for giving each street its name, and these take into account those made in the loose-leaf index, but often differ. The responsibility for the contents of the street listing in this publication is mine, but I do not claim any personal copyright in the listing, and hope that it will at some future time assist in preparing Volume Three of *The Streets of Waltham Forest*.

I have to acknowledge, with gratitude, sight of detailed notes prepared by my colleague in Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society, David Chapman. The suggestion that I revise and extend the information on the loose-leaf

sheets came from David Pracy, former Local Studies Librarian, and from the Archivist for the London Borough of Waltham Forest, Ms Jo Parker. I thank them for their cheerful provision of facilities for me to do so. I apologise to them and to every reader for being unable to provide a more complete database of the origin and naming of the streets of Leyton and Leytonstone. Hopefully the Borough will at some future time receive sufficient funds to commission a true third volume of *The Streets of Waltham Forest*.

David Boote
Leytonstone
November 2012

Introduction

The parish of Leyton contained two medieval manors and part of another. Leyton Grange was around the church of St Mary's. Ruckholt had a manor house, at its southern end and even closer to the marshes in the valley of the River Lea, but it stretched north to include Leytonstone. Ruckholt manor was purchased in 1731 by the family that held the manor of Wanstead. Mark Manor was partly in Leyton and partly in Walthamstow, and seems to have been carved out of the manors of Leyton Grange and Low Hall.

In 1840 a railway was built up the Lea Valley along the western edge of Leyton parish, and in 1856 a branch from Stratford to Loughton was built through the manor of Ruckholt. The later line was the stimulus for construction of terraced housing, but the most dramatic initial consequences were not in Ruckholt manor but in Leyton Grange, where
the manor house was demolished in 1860 and a network of streets laid out over its grounds and adjacent fields. Though described in auction leaflets as within a short walk of *Low Leyton* station, this first development was surprisingly distant. It was a rather strange beginning, but the process was started by which Leyton and Leytonstone were turned from countryside into a total urban environment before the First World War.

The population of Leyton and Leytonstone increased from 4,794 in 1861 to 10,394 in 1871. By 1881 it had risen to 27,068 including areas transferred to Leyton's local government unit from Walthamstow and Wanstead. The population increased to 63,056 in 1891, to 98,912 in 1901, 124,735 in 1911, and 128,430 in 1921[1].

[1] (source : the Victoria County History of Essex)

Leyton and Leytonstone were part of a ring of suburbs created around London by the forces of a free market economy. Local government did not direct those forces but reacted to them. Most of the participants were individuals and small partnerships. The British Land Company was one of the few organisations of any size to play a role. Created in 1856, it developed 12 estates in Leyton, starting with Leyton Grange in 1860. It identified sites, negotiated with the landowner, planned a street layout, divided the area into building plots for sale at auction, and offered short term finance to builders. The British Land Company had a party political motive in its early years. It was increasing the number of houses that had a value sufficient to give the male owner a vote in parliamentary elections, which he probably did not have before. This increase in the total electorate was expected to favour Liberal candidates, and limit the power of wealthy landowners who defended the privileged position of the Church of England. The number of men permitted to vote in elections to the House of Commons was increased in 1867, and from that time it is more difficult to identify political motives in the operations of the British Land Company. It does seem to have kept its character long after 1867. In the years from 1892 the Company's secretary was Edward James Davis, a local Liberal party activist who attended the Vicarage Road Baptist Church and was elected to the Leyton School Board.

As Leyton expanded most houses were rented. A builder might erect a row of about 6 houses, and then sell them to someone investing a lump sum in properties for renting out. This system had a number of consequences. Many of the older streets seem at first sight like one long terrace each side, but on a closer look there are slight changes in height and design so that houses form short uniform blocks within the longer terrace. These short

blocks would have been constructed as one unit. A whole street might be some years, even decades, in construction. At one time the area looked chaotic, with building sites dotted around many streets. Presumably this competition between small-scale builders kept prices down, and finance from private investors contributed to a truly open market.

The listing which follows this introduction conforms with Volumes One and Two of *The Streets of Waltham Forest* in giving a single date a street was 'occupied (the first occurrence in the rate-books' (in the words of Volume One Walthamstow). This gives the earliest date any house in a street could have been built and occupied. It is probably a reasonable indication of the approximate date of construction of houses within one development. A long street like Grove Green Road or Vicarage Road would fall within a number of different developments spread over time.

The reason for choosing a particular name for a street was either not recorded or the record was not retained. In the 19th century the street names appear on maps made for the developer and were probably chosen by the developer, such as the British Land Company, which would hope the names sounded attractive to those looking for a home and to those investing in the development. Names associated with trees and the adjacent Epping Forest were popular. References to the Royal family were also popular.

Although streets were named on estate development maps, street numbering of houses was often delayed. Short blocks erected as single building projects were often given names ending in 'Villas', 'Terrace' or similar, and the units within the blocks numbered or given individual names, so that they could be located before the whole street was numbered

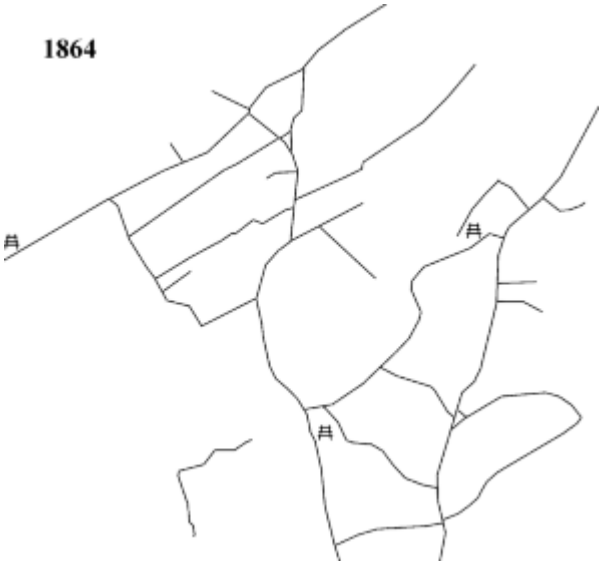
sequentially. The first names of houses can sometimes still be seen as a plaque on the upper storey; more frequently the shape of the name plaque can be seen but no lettering.

The following sketch maps show the expanding network of streets in Leyton.

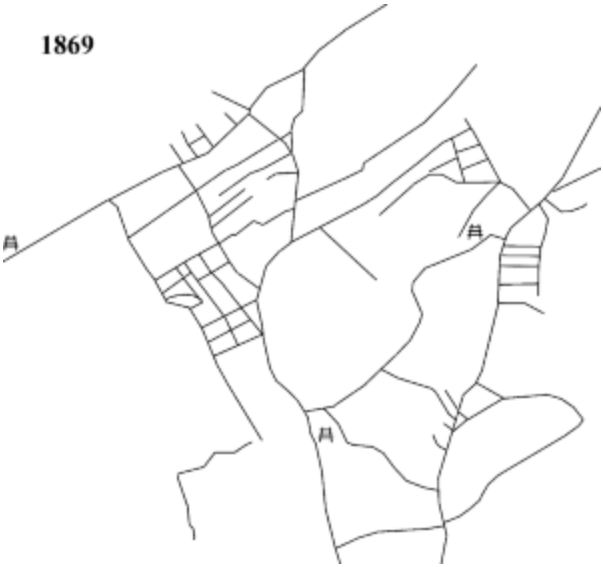
David Boote

The symbol shows the location of a railway station.

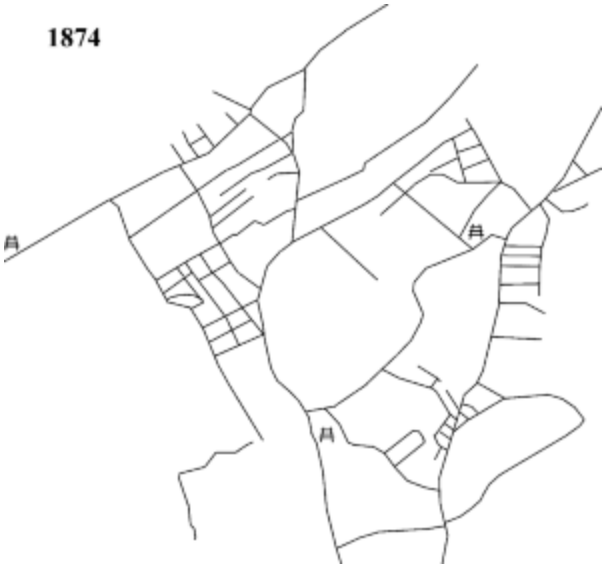
1864



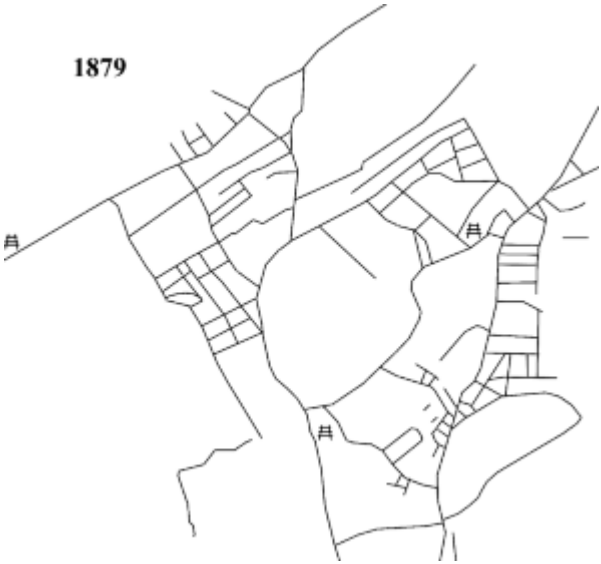
1869



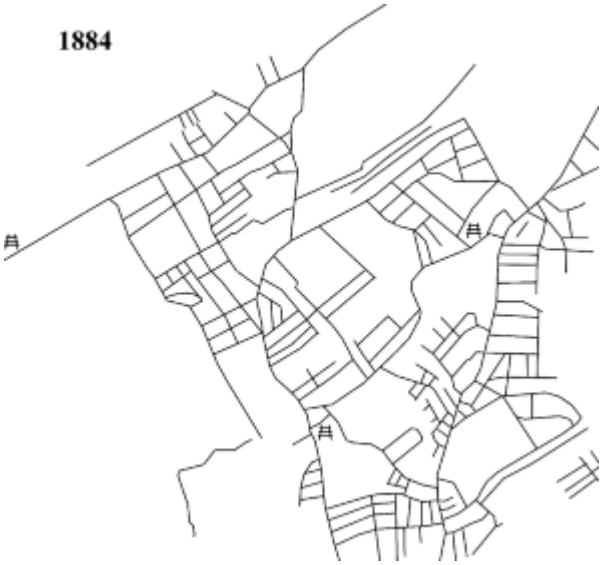
1874



1879



1884



1889

1894

1899

1904

1909

1914